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# BOSTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE MODERN NOVEL OF THE SOIL

by

Marjorie Grey Smith

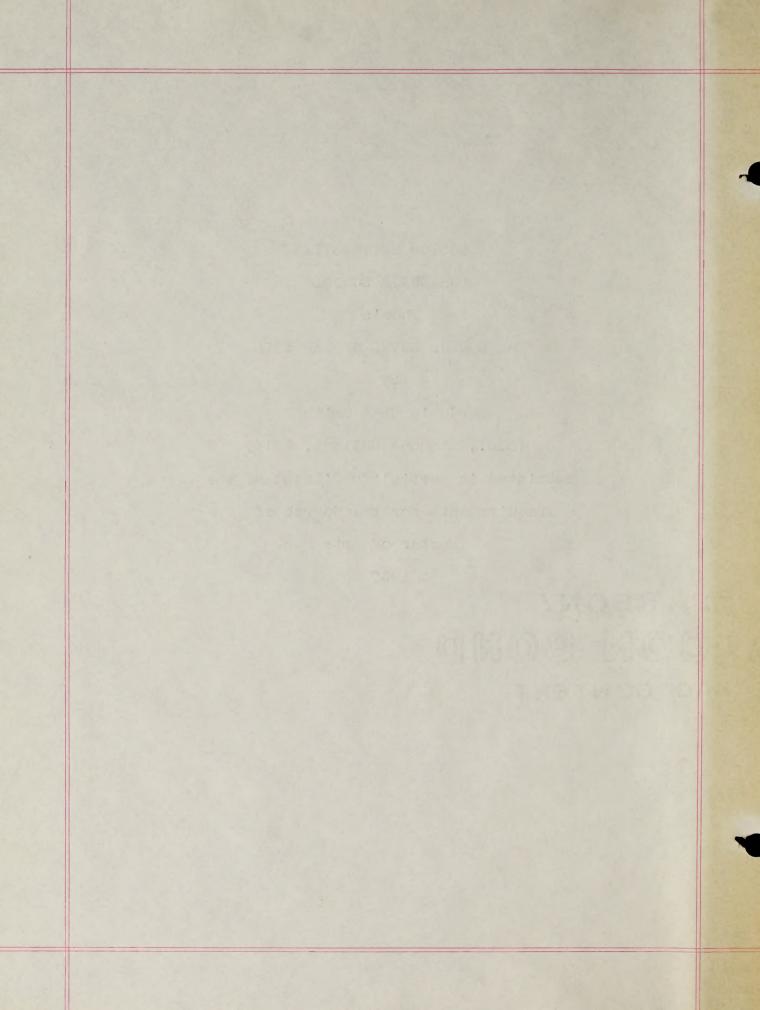
(S.B., Simmons College, 1914)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

1937



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THE MODERN NOVEL OF THE SOIL

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Marjorie Grey Smith

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### INTRODUCTION

A phrase familiar to the reader of literary reviews is the expression " a novel of the soil". When a person attempts to define the expression, however, he is led into devious fields. In the first place, he should interpret the word soil to mean the earth itself and not to signify the presence of nature or any of its aspects and manifestations in the novel. Thus, he should distinguish soil novels from nature novels. Again in attempting the definition, he is confronted with a bewildering array of novels in which the soil is present but in varying degrees of importance. Thus, he may wonder what constitutes "a novel of the soil". A careful consideration of the subject leads to the definition of a real novel of the soil as one in which the soil is such a predominating influence in its effect upon plot and character that it is the central force of the novel. To test the validity of this definition, it is necessary to examine all the novels into which the soil enters, to weigh the importance of the influence of the soil, and to discover the novels in which the soil is the most potent factor. These novels which will be considered the real novels of the soil will be analyzed in detail; the effect of the soil upon the plot shown; and the novels evaluated. Because of the vast scope of the subject the novels to be considered will be limited to the American and outstanding English novels published in the years from 1921 through 1934.

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Since the word modern is subject to such a wide interpretation, it is pertinent to explain the reason that the year 1921 has been chosen as a starting point for the discussion of the modern novel of the soil. Prior to 1921 traces of the soil are to be found in Hardy's Wessex novels and in Willa Cather's "O Pioneers" and "My Antonia", while Sheila Kaye-Smith's "Sussex Gorse" is a novel of the soil in much the same sense as her "Joanna Godden". In 1921, however, the novel of the soil had become recognized to such an extent that for the first time it received a separate classification in the Book Review Digest as fiction dealing with farm life. In 1921, also, Knut Hamsun's "Growth of the Soil", a soil novel that has exerted a notable influence, was published in English.

An examination of the novels with which the soil has any connection reveals the fact that these novels may be classified in the following groups: first, farm novels in which the farm serves only as a romantic background for love interest or for a melodramatic tale with only a remote suggestion of the soil itself; second, farm novels in which the farm is important chiefly as a historical background, with the soil of minor significance; third, farm novels of local color where the soil enters, but is of secondary interest to the local customs and traditions; fourth, farm novels in which the soil is the basis for agrarian or economic problems; fifth, novels in which the characters are influenced to such an extent by the soil that it is an important factor in the novel; and finally, the novels in which the soil is

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the essential element in that the chief characters are an embodiment of the soil or that the soil is so important in its effect
upon plot and character that it becomes the central force in the
novel. This last type with its divisions constitutes the real
novels of the soil.

## THE MODERN NOVEL OF THE SOIL

#### Part One

Novels in which the farm serves merely as a background for romance or melodrama are numerous. As a whole they are sentimental and the farm appears as artifical as a painted stage set.

"Dust" by Mr. and Mrs. Haldeman-Julius depicts the drab existence of a woman who married a man whose life for years has been centered upon a Kansas farm which has prospered better than those of his neighbors. For a little while, she arouses in him a love for life and interests outside the farm, but soon both the husband and wife are drawn back into a life of toil. The sentimental nature of the heroine and the practicality of the hero bring tragedy to their love. They remain together, though, until Martin dies, realizing that the farm for which he has slaved means nothing to Rose who will leave it as soon as she is released. The soil plays little part in the novel except to serve as a background upon which the hero spends his energy and to symbolize with its dust the dead hopes of Rose and Martin.

"Daughter of Adam" by Cora M. Harris recounts sentimentally the tale of a successful writer who spurned the city with its literary glories to return to the farm and find happiness there with "A sturdy son of the soil". In this novel the soil is sentimentalized until it seems artificial.

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"The Able McLaughlins" by Margaret Wilson takes place on a mid-western farm. The novel is the love story of Wally McLaughlin and Chirstie McNair, who has been seduced by Peter Keith, her cousin, just before Wally, whom she loves, returns from the Civil War. Wally marries Chirstie and fathers Peter's child. The novel reveals Wally's love for Chirstie and his hatred for Peter, whom, however, he befriends when he finds him dying. Although Wally's father loves the land and Wally and Chirstie rejoice in their farm, there is but small mention of the soil in the novel.

"Wild Harvest" by John M. Oskison, a prairie love story
with its setting in Oklahoma, relates the romance of Nan Forest,
a heroine who happened to live on a farm. The reader is told
her thoughts while she is hoeing or concerned with some menial
farm task. The farm setting is conventional and artificial,
and the characters in the novel, colorless.

"Old Hurricane" by Julia Flisch is laid in Georgia before
the Civil War. It is the story of a valuable farm that has reverted to the state and is drawn in a lottery by Abner Wheelock.
The interest in the novel centres in the efforts of Sally
Wheelock, Abner's wife, to save the farm, which is nearly lost
through Abner's shiftless irresponsibility. The reader is
made to feel the value of "Old Hurricane" through the tireless
efforts of the energetic Sally to save it for her children, but
there is no emphasis upon the soil for its own sake.

"Grain" by Robert J. Stead has for a setting a Manitoba
farm and tells the story of William Stake, who, for a very triv-

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ial reason so offended the girl of his choice that she married another. Stake's rather futile life is recorded in a biographical manner, and his character is not analyzed. At times in the accounts of the growing and harvesting of the wheat the reader is made aware of the farm setting, but it is the frustrated hero who holds the central place in the novel.

"Singing River" by Alice DeFord recounts the romance between Mary Martin and John Evelyn. Left in charge of a farm, the heroine hired John Evelyn, who appeared as a wanderer with child Tat.

As foremen, Evelyn, who was later discovered to be of noble birth, made the farm pay, and the inevitable happy ending resulted. The farm setting provides an agreeable background for the love interest.

"Uplands" by Mary Ellen Chase tells the story of an adolescent girl, who, with the coming of spring, experiences her first love. Under the spell of the new emotions, she realized for the first time the beauty of her surroundings, and she is dissatisfied with her life on the farm for the drudgery of her daily tasks prevent her from enjoying the beauty of the out-of-doors. She is attracted to Abner, who shares her feelings of discontent.

After being married to him, she is happy, but Abner is killed, and Martha dies when her child is born. The tragedy in the novel is forced, and the author's pictures of farm life in Maine are unconvincing. There is but little suggestion of the soil.

"Migration" by David Grew, laid upon the Dakota prairies, is another sentimental romance of a girl and boy who rebel against the restrictions and drudgeries of farm life. After

breaking away, both return to the farm to find happiness with each other. In spite of the fact that the author is attempting to show the difficulties of farm life, he reveals only the possibilities which the farm offers for romance, for although the farm and its activities are flashed before the reader occasionally, there is meager suggestion of the soil.

"Black Cherries" by Grace Coates is told from the point of view of a five year old child, who naturally senses but little the significance of what goes on about her. From what Veve tells, however, the reader is made aware of the failure of a Kansas farmer and his wife to make a farm pay. Poverty forces the family to the city where conditions are scarcely more favorable. The interest in the novel is focussed upon Veve's attempts to understand life rather than upon the soil.

"There's Always Another Year" by Martha Ostenso has for its setting the Dakota prairies. It is the story of a young farmer, Roderick Willard, whose interest in farming was interrupted by the selfish demands of his wife and his growing attraction for Silver Grenoble for whom he worked. This novel, lacking the vitality of "Wild Geese" fails also to give the reader any feeling of the soil, but leaves the impression of the farm simply as a background for love interest.

"The Stranger's Return" by Phil Stong tells of the return of Louise Storr to a prosperous farm in Iowa. At the farm she finds contentment with her grandfather, who has lived for years with unsympathetic relatives. Before Grandfather Storr dies, he re-

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Louise Store to a prespercus farm in Tome. At the fure she I'nd
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Louise to relatives. Esters Grandfather Store Store for a re-

makes his will and leaves the farm to Louise. The novel is interesting for the character sketches of Louise and her grandfather and for its portrayal of a country community. There are glimpses of broad acres, of harvesting, and of haying, but there is no real suggestion of the soil.

"Old Farm" by Mrs. Ettie S. Prichard is laid in Illinois in the 1870's. Dood Schofield, the nine year old heroine, from whose point of view the story is told, felt the fascination of the soil. She was satisfied to have her roots planted in Old Farm and did not wish, like the movers, to travel on to new places.

The plot, however, which includes a kidnaping, the apprehension of a thief, the overthrowing of a criminal who attempted to spread hog cholera, the wedding of one pair of lovers, and the reuniting of a man and his wife who had been separated for years are so melodramatic that the slight suggestions of the soil which add value to the novel are lost from sight, and Old Farm with its traditions is subordinated in interest to the activities of a phenomenal nine year old.

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#### Part Two

In the novels where the farm serves as a historical background, the reader is more aware of the soil since it furnishes
the background for hardy pioneers who, in their attempts to establish a civilization, must wrest a living from the earth. In
the process of making history and establishing homes for their
children, they met and subdued the soil.

"Vandermark's Folly" by Herbert Quick traces the life of Jacob Vandermark from his boyhood experiences along the Erie Canal through his trek to Iowa where he took up a homestead and became a prosperous and respected citizen in an Iowan farming community. Besides seeing history in the making from the impressions gained of life along the Erie Canal, of the pioneers' difficulties in crossing prairies and establishing their homes, and of local politics in a pioneering community, the reader is made aware of the land as the foundation for building up a civilization. In one place the influence of the soil is strongly felt in the description of the wedding of the plow and the sod, as is revealed in the following quotation:

"Sod of the meadows and pastures is quite a different thing from the untouched skin of the original earth. Breaking prairie was the most beautiful, most epochal, and most hopeful, and as I look at it, in one way the most pathetic thing man ever did, for

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in it, one of the loveliest things ever created began to come to a predestined end."1

"Black Soil" by Josephine Donovan traces the fortunes of the Connor family from the time that Tim and Mrs. Connor arrive as immigrants upon a prairie farm in Northwestern Iowa until the community grows to such an extent that Tim desires to seek new fields. The novel gives a good picture of the mingling of various racial strains and shows how racial prejudices felt by the German, Dutch, Austrian, and Irish settlers die out gradually in the face of the tragedies and joys which all as pioneers share. One sees the carving out of Iowan history in the courageous spirit shown by the early settlers when they experience the destroying of successive crops by drought, fire, and grasshoppers, and one admires their fortitude in bearing the scourge of sickness that must be endured without adequate medical care. In Tim Connor one feels the touch of the soil since he derives satisfaction from the beauty of the prairie, from plowing the rich, black soil and from planting grain.

"Army Without Banners" by John Beames is similar in content to "Black Soil", although the scene is laid in the Saskatchewan. Drought, blizzards, and cold are stressed in the story of the Clovellys' life in passing from the pioneer stage to the comforts of civilization. The author regards the pioneers as conquerors of the soil, a triumphant army who have paved the way for civilization.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Vandermark's Folly" by Herbert Quick. Page 228.

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"Great Meadow" by Elizabeth M. Roberts depicts pioneer life in Kentucky. Here the experiences of Berk Jarvis and his wife Diony, who traveled from Virginia to settle in Kentucky, "the great meadow", are traced. A vivid account of life in a stockade and of Indian attacks is given. Diony with her staunch courage in meeting privations and hardships and in enduring the horrible sights of Indian massacres is a child of the earth as is her husband, Berk, who, captured by the Indians, makes his way home at last. The element of soil, however, is secondary to the impression which the reader receives of history in the making.

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## Part Three

In some novels in which the authors are concerned chiefly with the manners and customs of a locality that appeal to their imagination, the element of soil enters.

"Green Apple Harvest" by Sheila Kaye-Smith shows life as it is lived on Sussex farms. One meets characters who live close to the earth, and who love and hate and worship God with primitive intensity. Robert Fuller of Bodingnares is not so vividly of the soil as is Reuben Backfield in "Sussex Gorse" or Joanna Godden, but in reading of his life, one gets the atmosphere of a Sussex farm and Sussex life.

"Country People" by Ruth Suckow pictures the humdrum and colorless lives of a German American family in Iowa, and shows the rise of the Kaetterhenrys from humble tillers of the soil to prosperous farmers. One obtains a picture of the entire community with their narrow standards, material ideals, and their lack of cultural interests. While the Kaetterhenrys lived close to the earth, one admired their simplicity and satisfaction in tilling the soil; but after they became prosperous and were bored with life, one felt the futility of their lives, the futility that Sinclair Lewis satirizes in "Main Street".

"Precious Bane" by Mary G. Webb is rich in its picture of Shropshire life in the years preceding the Battle Waterloo. The ancient Shropshire custom of paying a sin-eater at the funeral of

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dead man to eat the sins of the deceased and thus free him from the punishments of the devil is the keynote of the novel since Gideon Sarn for eating his father's sins receives as payment the farm which has been left to Gideon's mother. Driven by a desire to derive gold from working the soil, he shuts all other influences from his life. Lusting for gold almost as if impelled by Satan, he forces his mother to work upon the farm until she is worn out. Then, when her usefulness is over, he has her He deserts a girl whom he has betrayed and refuses to recognize his child. Finally, after his former love has committed suicide, Gideon, despised and deserted by all his friends, takes his own life. The reader, however, is not so concerned in following the dark impulses of Gideon Sarn as in reading/the Shropshire customs of playing at cards for cakes, of the bull baiting, of the love-carriage for the corn, and of the displaying of a Venus on May Day. The superstitions concerning Gideon's sister Prue, who was believed to consort with witches and dance with the devil since she had a hare lip, the belief that the bees must be told of a death or they will leave, and the Shropshire dialect - all add to the local color of the novel.

"Mary Glenn" by Sarah G. Millin is not only a character sketch of the heroine, but is a tale of the life upon a farm in South Africa. The author stresses hunting especially, describes a trip through the bush, and depicts the life of the Kaffirs.

"A Virtuous Woman" by Daphne Muir is richer than the foregoing novel in its pictures of life in a South African farming form witch man been left to Gideon's mother. Deliver or a destr is worn out. Then, when her mush is owns, he has her to recognize his child. Finelly, ofter his former love has

town. The novel opens with the curious ritual of a Boer wooing in which the farmer, Sarel Le Roux, sat for several nights in the company of Sanni, while a candle surrounded by pins burned to its base. The wedding customs with the three-hour ceremony at the church and then the drive to the farm in a native cart with its leather cushions and glittering metal work gave the reader a vivid introduction to the life of the heroine, Sanni, who conformed to the conventions of her time with astonishing meekness. The interest in the novel is centred in Sanni's duties as mistress of the farm. As a character, she is overshadowed by her husband's mother and his loyal African servant who possess more vitality than either the hero or the heroine and who belong to the earth.

"Ladybrook" by Eleanor Farjeon depicts farm life on Sussex

Downs in the sixties. As Deborah Shaw recounts her life on the

farm when, as a maid, she attracted the love of her master's oldest son, one is conscious of the countryside and gains an idea,

especially, of the harvesting ceremonies and of the stag hunt.

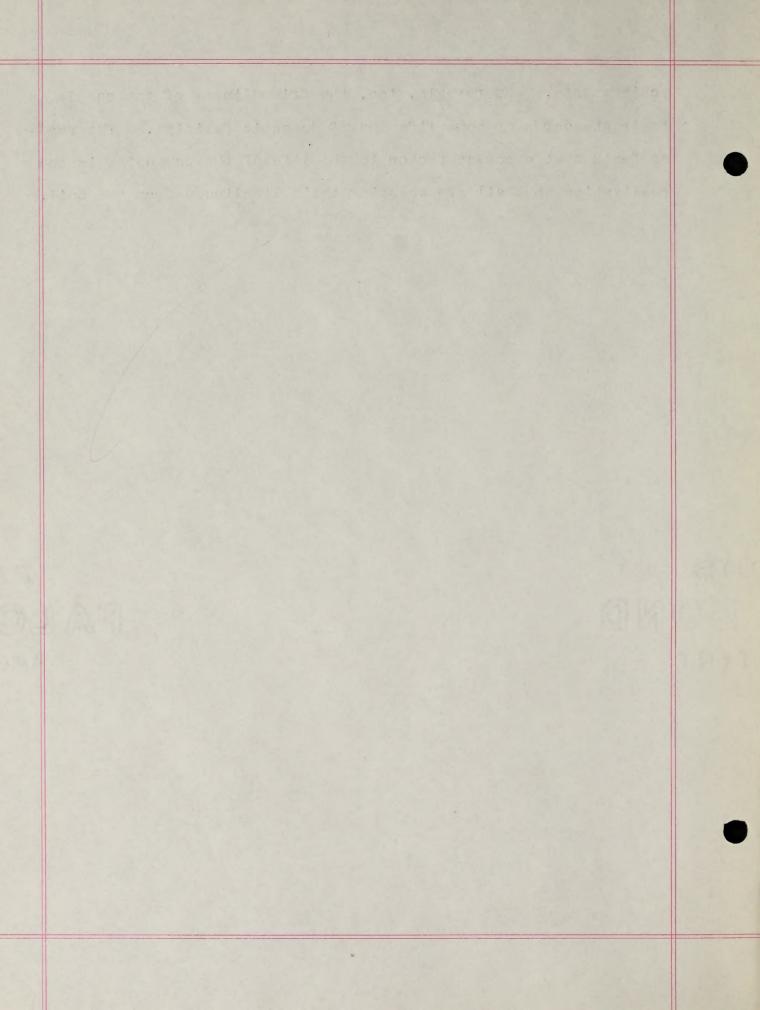
"State Fair" by Phil Stong shows a cross section of life in Iowa in modern times. By recounting the interests of the Frake family in the State Fair and by telling of their experiences there, he pictures the life of the entire community. The highest point of interest in the novel is the awarding of a blue ribbon to prize hog, Blue Boy. In his pictures of the fair, the author shows a community brought together by common interests in stock, in products of the soil, and in culinary and domestic

to which the former, Sand is jumix, ash for several ninets in in which the former, Sand is jumix, ash for several ninets in the company of Sanni, while a candle surrounded by plas burned to its base. This wedding customs with the annea-hour geramony at the course and then the drive to the fermi in a notive cast with the factors and then the drive to the fermi in a notive cast with its labeler a wird and intended to the life of the neroles, canni, who conformed to the conventions of the rich asteriated in another the fermi is castrone as the contrast of the fermi as a server and the server the cast as the fermi as the fermi as the castrone and the server the cast as the fermi as the fer

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achievements. He reveals, too, the friendliness of the people, their standards of home life and of domestic felicity. The reader feels that a potent factor in the life of the community is the realization that all are wresting their livelihood from the soil.



## Part Four

Some novelists recognize the importance of the soil as the basis for economic or agrarian difficulties and are concerned chiefly with the problems which the soil presents to their characters who have been the victims of a changing economic order because their lives have been bound to the earth. War or an evolving industrial order have worked havoc upon their environment and have made their land a liability. Here the interest is focused upon the manner in which the characters react to a modified environment.

"Samuel Drummond" by Thomas Boyd is a novel with the author's emphasis upon the changing order of agricultural conditions. He shows how Samuel Drummond by dint of unceasing toil achieved prosperity upon his Ohio farm until the Civil War is declared. When he leaves to go to war, his wife with the aid of a servant is unable to carry on the farm, and he returns to find his work of years gone for naught. Although he tries to reclaim his farm, agricultural conditions have changed so much that he can not make his land pay. He struggles for many years but, in the end, he loses his farm and with his wife returns to town. The deleterious effects of the Civil War upon farming are illustrated in Samuel Drummond's unsuccessful efforts.

"Tobacco Road" by Erskine Caldwell is the study of a primitive poor white community in Georgia, where the people have dete-

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riorated until there is not an intelligent nor morally sane person among their numbers. Soil enters the novel to quite an extent, but it is hardly just to consider it the factor responsible for the disintegration of the Lesters and others of their kind - rather the cause is the changing agricultural order and the poverty resulting from worn-out land. The progressive members of the community have been attracted to the cotton mills where they can earn an adequate livelihood while the people remaining on the land, too indolent and too poor to work hard enough to make it pay, have lapsed into a moral turpitude revolting to contemplate.

Jeeter Lester, the most important character in the book, and an old man when the story opens, is the grandson of the owner of a prosperous tobacco plantation. Jeeter has inherited a love for the land. He says of himself:

"When the winter goes, and when it gets time to burn off broom-sedge in the fields and underbrush in the thicket, I sort of want to cry...... The smell of that sedge-smoke this time of year near about drives me crazy. Then pretty soon all the other farmers start plowing. That's what gets under my skin the worse. When the smell of that new earth turning over behind the plows strikes me, I get all weak and shaky. It's in my blood - burning broom-sedge and plowing in the ground this time of year. I did it for near about fifty years, and my Pa and his Pa before him was the same kind of men. Us Lesters sure like to stir the earth and make plants grow in it. I can't move off to the Cotton mills like the rest of them do. The land

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"Men the violer rose, and when it rets to burn off broom-sedge in the fields end underbrush in two thicket, I south of want to cry...... The small of the medic-smoke this of want to cry...... The small of the medic smoke this the offer farmers start plowing. That's what gets under my slin the worse. When the small of that new certs turning over can'ind the plows shrikes me. I set all week end shally. It's in my blood - burning broom-sedex and plowing in the ground this in the of year. I did it for near about fifty roses, and my he and wis fire of year. I did it for near about fifty roses, and my he sure like to stir the earth and make pleats area. Us Lesters are sure like to stir the earth and make pleats area in it. I complete the detach mills like the rose of them in. It completes are near to the detach of them in.

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has got a powerful hold on me."1

If Jeeter had shown the evidence of the hard labor which he mentions here, he might have salvaged something from the work of the plantation, but throughout the book, he impresses one with his laziness. He never admits to this fault, but in a pessimistic mood, he complains constantly of others' failure to trust him and when he is more optimistic, Jeeter feels that the Lord will provide. Jeeter as well as the other members of the community live like animals. Life for them means the satisfaction of the primitive instincts of hunger and sex. In the case of sex, however, they are not even motivated by the animal's urge to propagate the species. Jeeter's one redeeming trait is his love for the land, and it is through this love that he meets his death, for he sets fire to the broom-sedge with the vague idea of clearing the land in case, by some miracle, he can obtain the wherewithal to plant it. The fire that he starts and allows to burn at its will is driven, by a change of wind, toward Jeeter's dwelling and consumes the house with Jeeter and his wife, Ada.

A touch of the soil is introduced in the closing words of the novel when Dude, Jeeter's almost imbecile son, who has married Bessie, a primitive evangelist says:

"I reckon I'll get me a mule somewhere and some cotton-seed and guano and grow me a crop of cotton this year.... It feels to me like it's going to be a good year for cotton. Maybe I could grow me a bale to the acre, like Pa was always talking

l"Tobacco Road" by Erskine Caldwell. Page 21.

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<sup>&</sup>quot;Tobecon Hoad by Brayine Caldwall. Page 21.

about doing."1

In spite of the fact that the influence of the soil is felt in the novel, the appeal of the book is to a social worker who would study a degenerate community rather than to a reader who would discover a novel of the soil.

"Fathers of Their People" and "Pond Hall's Progress" by H.

W. Freeman trace in a similar fashion the change in English farming conditions caused to a great extent by the World War.

"Fathers of Their People" shows life at Pond Hall, which has been in the Brundish family for generations. Each Brundish has felt the urge to become a yeoman farmer like his father and has attempted to carry on the Suffolk farm so that he may deserve the title "father of his people". Dick Brundish leaves school when he is very young, as he desires to assist his father Adam in the cultivation of Pond Hall. The book deals with Adam's problems. Because of his quick temper, he quarrels with the laborers he hires and with his tenants. He has difficulty in training the irresponsible Dick in farm tradition. Already there is unrest among the tenant farmers and a spirit of change from older days. Adam Brundish, however, through generosity to an enemy wins the respect of his tenants and the coveted toast "father of his people". In the end, Dick Brundish, Adam's only son, has enlisted for the World War.

"Pond Hall's Progress" shows the gradual disintegration of Pond Hall. Dick Brundish is unable to carry on the farm after

<sup>1&</sup>quot;Tobacco Road" by Erskine Caldwell. Page 241.

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"Ecnd Holl's Progress" shows the gradual distribution of meties west and no votes of elden at helicare state. . [18]

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his return from war. For a while, while Adam is still alive, he manages to carry on, but after his father's death conditions get worse and worse. There is a dearth of farm laborers because so many have been lost in France. Men have lost their interest in the land, and there are large taxes and higher wages for laborers. Finally, when Dick dies exhausted with his struggles, his widow sells the farm and so Dick's two sons can not carry out the traditions of their sturdy English forebears.

"Gipsy Waggon" by Sheila Kaye-Smith deals with the problem of the English tenant farmer from the point of view of the tenants rather than the squire. It, too, depicts conditions following the World War. Fred Sinder, a Sussex farmer, who had inherited his father's plough and rights to his farm married a Sussex girl and planned on a comfortable life, though one of toil. In the face of competition with Russian, Canadian, and Roumanian wheat which flooded the market, the Sussex farmers were unable to carry on their large farms. When Float Farm was sold and Sinder lost his living, he decided to buy a caravan from the gypsies. Although he had been bred upon the soil, he found that in the caravan his family and he were able to live comfortably and thriftily. Later, when he was offered a chance to be a tenant farmer on a prosperous farm, he decided to remain in the gypsy wagon since life there meant economic security.

"The Farm" by Louis Bromfield traces the history of a farm in Northern Ohio from the time it was purchased by a pioneer until it was abandoned, a thing of ruin. In telling the story,

"The Farm" De Louis struction the time of traces the relation of a form in contrary Onio from the time it was purchased or a pioneer until it was abandoned, a thing of ruin. In telling the story,

the author portrays vividly certain characters like the Colonel and James Ferguson. These characters, however, are used to illustrate a strain that has died out with the passing in certain sections of the country of an agricultural into an industrial order. The Colonel and all his associates who were interested in cultivating the soil and promoting civilization have been succeeded by new generations who have different interests and who have abandoned a life which proved for them an economic failure.

## Part Five

A number of novels closely approach the real novels of the soil in so far as they contain characters who are influenced by the soil. In these novels, however, the soil is not made vital since, although it is an influential factor in the novel, it is not a predominating force. The reader is aware of the soil, but senses it only as a subordinate influence in the lives of the characters and not as a force at the core of their being.

"Autumn" by Robert Nathan has been called by Carl Van Doren
"an all but perfect native pastoral". There is little plot in
the novel; rather the book is a sketch of Mr. Jeminy, an old
school-master in a New England village. Mr. Jeminy is rich in
the resources found within himself, for he walks often in the
company of St. Francis, Plotinius, and beloved characters drawn
from books. He cares not for wealth, and he says to his pupils
on the last day of school:

l"I would like to teach you to be happy. For happiness is not in owning much, but in owning little: love and liberty, the work of one's hands, fellowship and peace. These things have no value; they are not to be bought, but they alone are worth having. Do not envy the rich man, for cares destroy his sleep. And do not ask the poor man not to sing, for song is all

<sup>1 &</sup>quot;Autumn" by Robert Nathan. Page 33.

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1 "Autumn" by Hobert Hathen. Page 33.

he has."

When Mr. Jeminy is too old to teach, he leaves the village where he has taught for many years, and goes to a farm where he is hired as a helper. In contact with the earth he finds the same satisfaction that he draws from reading philosophy. Thus the soil has a part in his life.

"So Big" by Edna Ferber is essentially a character study of Selina De Jong as well as of her son Dirk, a study in which the mother is revealed as a much more worthy person than her son. Selina represents a character influenced by the soil. While she was being driven to High Prairie, a Dutch settlement near Chicago, where she was to begin her teaching, she exclaimed about the beauty of a field of cabbages. Later, when she married Pervus De Jong, a Dutch truck farmer, and worked with him in the fields, the author says of her:

l"There was born in Selina at this time a feeling for the land that she was never to lose. Perhaps the child within her had something to do with this. She was aware of a feeling of kinship with the earth; an illusion of splendour, of fulfilment."

This vision lingered with her, and after her husband's death, it caused her to regard the transportation of the vegetables to market in the light of an adventure, and it impelled her to labor until she had made the farm more successful than had her husband. Even when she had attained material prosperity so that she could educate Dirk and live very comfortably herself, the farm meant more to her than simply the means of getting her living. In

1"So Big" by Edna Ferber. Page 121.

enells feet say El at the the the test at the test and at the test and a second some and constitute to the section of the section o The at of Jame a sem fitte and . nos teti naud nasato vadanov eras lesas a as esfacrea at gonjai align . It has end you have subtract to doors to a witnessen on and last balance and made install . Income to light a to yeard out ren middle bline end aparm . enclose davak and market frot To relient a to early but a total and a total and a prince but

her work in the earth she found beauty and self expression, two qualities she failed to inspire in her son, who forsook architecture to sell bonds and later to become a banker. At the end when Roelf Pool, in whom, when he was a small boy, Selina had aroused a love of beauty and who had become a famous artist with a wide experience, complimented Selina upon her rich life, the reader felt the truth of Pool's statements as well as the conviction that the soil had contributed its part to Selina's richness.

"Green Bush" by John T. Frederick relates the story of Frank
Thompson, who is a college man and the son of an editor of a farm
paper and who renounces the opportunity to teach in a college to
take up farming. When he comes to coping with the soil, he finds
his task difficult. In clearing land for a pasture, he is injured, and his leg is crippled. Still he remains in the country
where he farms and carries on a local paper. When offered an
important position in the city, Frank writes to his friend Steen
thus:

l"Of this alone I can be certain: that love and knowledge of the earth which means daily observation and the acceptance of the facts of birth and death, of the puniness of man's efforts and the little meaning of his life, has brought me happiness: compounded of joy in simple things - pleasure in food, in wife and children, in beauty of flower and tree, of sky and water and the forms of earth, in the dependence and faithfulness of

<sup>1&</sup>quot;Green Bush" by John T. Frederick. Page 301.

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<sup>&</sup>quot;Breen Bush" by John T. Frederice. : are 501.

beasts, in freedom that comes from knowledge and acceptance of my weakness and of death.

"The earth has maimed and broken me, perhaps, as ultimately it will defeat every effort of my life. But also it has given me strength to bear disaster and defeat and death."

"Green Bush" which is quietly and simply written lacks epic scope. It is as if the author were expounding his favorite theories and finding inspiration in the poetry of the earth rather than in its virile qualities. For this reason the novel seems slightly artificial and does not carry the conviction of being a genuine novel of the soil comparable to those in the last class.

"Hardy Rye" by Daniel Chase tells the story of the Wheelocks, Massachusetts farmers who felt the call of the rich acres in the West. In each generation one member of the family had gone there. When Wes Wheelock, the hero, was a small boy, he had seen his Aunt Thyrza marry and go to the West and he had planned to go away as soon as he was old enough. He found, however, that his brothers had made up their minds to leave and that he must remain on the old farm. Philosophically accepting his lot of remaining, Wes caused the farm to prosper and he even produced crops in a field that had been denominated "Waste".

Satisfaction came to him in his life, restricted though it was. He watched with regret his son leave the old farm for town, but when Wes was too old to carry on any longer, he was gladdened by the fact that his grandson refused an offer to go West and remained instead to cultivate the farm. Although Wes Wheelock is

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portrayed so unostentatiously, one feels that his life is centred in the earth of the farm, which he had cultivated as long as he was able and which he turned over to his grandson with a feeling of content that there would be another Wheelock to carry on the tradition. As he came upon his grandson Mel plowing under the winter rye much to the astonishment of Mel's wife, the old man explained to her:

l"Winter rye's good for nothing else. It holds the land, makes it rich. Just a between crop. It nourishes what comes after."

That statement Wes felt was symbolic of the Wheelock tradition and of his life. His grandson and he were like the "hardy rye".

While there is much of the soil in this novel, the earth can not be considered the central force for the characters feel no special love for it nor do they seem of it. Instead they represent a sort of New England farm tradition.

"Speak to the Earth" by Sarah Comstock relates the story of Effie, who, because of the wiles of a real estate salesman, found herself stranded on the Dakota Bad Lands. Here she married Victor French, a sheep rancher and a disillusioned war veteran. In the prairie, for the first time Effie became acquainted with the earth. She loved the prairie so much that she found satisfaction in it, and before dying in child-birth, she was able to inspire in Victor a love for the land that helped reconcile him.

1"Hardy Rye" by Daniel Chase. Page 326.

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largy rye" by Doniel Chase. Pere 326.

Although, in this novel, Effie French does feel a love for the earth and is transformed by this love, the book is so sentimentally conceived that her love and transformation seem artificial. Consequently, the book does not carry the conviction of being a novel of the soil. Neither can it be considered a worth while novel.

"Pines of Jaalam" by Daniel Chase is really a character study of Lavinia Copeland, who becomes so absorbed in a project of raising seedling pines upon her New England farm that she allows the deeper experiences in life to pass her by. She lives, breathes, and thinks in terms of land and of pines until the man to whom she is engaged breaks the engagement. Her final project of purchasing more land on another farm proves a failure, but through this failure, the love of Matt Leyard, her foreman, is revealed and Lavinia realizes that, as important as are the pines of Jaalam, love is richer and more worthwhile. Since her interest in the pines and her farm enslaved Lavinia temporarily, it is seen that she was a character almost won over by the soil. She was not of the soil, however, for she felt no real affection for it, and did not possess any depth of character that gives one a feeling of the earth.

"Silver Ley" and "The Cherry Tree", its sequel, by Adrian
Bell are difficult novels to classify, since they are autobiographical novels that partake of the nature of a diary. Therefore, they have no plot. As the author relates his experiences
while he is an apprentice on a farm in Suffolk, one gets an im-

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pression that the author is finding happiness in life through the toil, and through his observations of his companions and of the earth with its poetry of growing things revealed in trees, flowers, and birds. The soil ministers to his comfort and well-being and adds to his life a significance that would be lost in a different environment. Although the author's style is not lofty, the books are worthy of consideration for a certain genuine quality. This idea is better expressed in a quotation from "The New Statesman and Nation" for August 29, 1931, which reads:

"In its quiet, considered picture of a small farm, in its gentle and discerning portraits of men and women, in its vivid sketches of typical scenes ......the book has a rare authority."

"Once a Wilderness" by Arthur Pound is a family chronicle that traces the lives of the Marks from pioneer days to contemporary times. It contains one character, however, that is outstanding in his love of the soil. This character is Captain John Mark who had taken up land as a homesteader and had, eventually, a farm of over six hundred acres of the best land in Michigan. Although his life had extended from the day of the covered wagon to the day of the automobile, although he had witnessed the change from an agricultural to an industrial order, although he had seen women enlarge their sphere from the home to politics, he kept close to the land.

Even when he had become owner of a huge farm and prize stock, he was not weaned from the land by prosperity. He began each day

pression that the author is finding happiness in life through the coll, and tarourn his observations of his commanions and of the south with its postery of growing things revested in trees, flower and birds. The soil ministers to his confort and well-being and adds to his life a significance that would be lost in a different environment. Although the author's style is not lofty, the book are worthy of consideration for a certain namine wester. Interest idea is better expressed in a quotetion from Trom "The New Statesman and Letton" for August 29, 1731, which reads:

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with an inspection of the Mark Section. While he walked about, the author says of him:

l"The first memories John Mark had were those of cleaning this land, pushing the forest back until, little by little, it broke into woodlots on hillocks or acres in the swampy creek bottoms. ..... There were times when he seemed so much a part of the Mark Section that he scarcely knew where John Mark the man and individual separated himself from John Mark the land."

Captain John accepted life with a sort of homely philosophy born of the soil. Once when his daughter Florrie was beginning to be interested in suffrage, he remarked, much to her chagrin, "As long as man is built somewhat like a bull, he will make love and war and boss his women."2

As his grandsons grew older and departed for the city, it seemed as if there would be no one left to carry on the Mark Section. The son in whom the Captain's hopes had been placed was killed in an accident upon the farm. The Captain, however, did not lose heart completely, for he felt sure that some of them would return to the land. At last the grandson most fitted to carry on the farm did return and the Captain thought to himself:

3"Mark section had stood another siege and was holding its won. Mark section had become stronger than its master, stronger than all its inhabitants combined, stronger than any force that could be mastered against it, stronger than towns and cities,

<sup>1 &</sup>quot;Once a Wilderness" by Arthur Pound. Page 16. 2 Ibid. Page 198.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Page 398

rith an inscretion of the lark Section. While he walked shout,

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<sup>&</sup>quot;Oace a wildernas" by Arbon Pound. Page 18.

stronger than anything in nature, in man or woman. He looked across the fertile breast of earth covered with a shawl of many colors which the hands of Mark had woven, and thought to himself:

'Here on this land I have created something mightier than myself.'

"For a moment it seemed to him, as he crossed slowly the open space before the barn, that his watery eyes beheld this daemon of Mark section, grotesquely long, striding over the fields, keeping step with himself. He wiped his eyes and then saw that it was only his shadow stretching westward from the whirling sun, which drives seasons and man alike to the service of the soil."

From the foregoing quotations it might appear that "Once a Wilderness" should be classified as a more important novel of the soil. On considering the book as a whole, however, the reader is impressed rather with the Mark family and the way in which the individuals have reacted to the changing times rather than with the soil. Although Captain John Mark with his passion for Mark section is an arresting figure, he is subordinated to the interests of his children and grandchildren who are not products of the land but of an industrial age, diminated by sweeping political changes.

stronger than unything is makine, in man or women. He looked norman the femilie breast of sarth covered with a sharl of many colors which the hands of wark hed woven, and thought to himself there on this land I have orested something mightier than myself for a somethi to seemed to him, as he drossed slowly the

open super before the bern, which his retery eyes behold this discren of darie the section, whitesquely long, striding over the first keeping step with binself. In wiped his eyes end then saw that it was only his abadew stretching at strength from the whirling our which drives seemes and man alige to the service of the seil."

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## Part Six

Finally one discovers the real novels of the soil. In these novels the chief character is the embodiment of the fundamental attributes of the soil as conceived by the author, or, the soil is the force that affects the plot and characters to such an extent that it becomes a character itself.

Before discussing those novels in which the characters epitomize the earth, it is pertinent to consider Elizabeth Drew's comments upon the novel of the soil in which she says:

"But mere keenness of observation and delicacy of descriptive skill are not enough in themselves to make a real novel of the soil, nor is the mere statement of elemental truths about the immutable earth and the essential reality of peasant life. These things have got to be felt with a passion which fuses character and background so indissolubly that the story cannot be thought of apart from the setting: it must be created from the earth, not constructed against a background of a certain locality, however carefully and even lovingly that background may have been observed and reported: it must have something of the quality which makes us conscious of the moors in every line of 'Wuthering Heights', though they are never directly described, something of the quality which makes it impossible to think of Tess or Bathsheba Everdene, apart from Wessex."

1"The Modern Novel" by Elizabeth Drew. Page 125.

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This definition may be applied directly to the following novels.

"Joanna Godden" by Sheila Kaye-Smith depicts a heroine that seems to embody the Rye Marsh in Sussex in which her farm, Little Ansdore, is located. At first, to be sure, Joanna impresses the reader as a rather harsh and unpleasant breeze from the marsh, for in the first chapter, one sees Joanna boxing vigorously the ears of the small Ellen, because she wishes to remove a hat with too tight an elastic. From the first, though, one senses the depths in Joanna's nature in philosophical acceptance of her father's death and her determination to carry on the farm.

Before knowing Joanna well, her lover, Martin Trevor feels the same unpleasant quality about her, but before long he expresses the idea which the reader has gained upon further acquaintance, when he thinks:

l"He liked her now - he told himself that she was good common stuff. She was like some sterling homespun piece, strong
and sweet-smelling - she was like a plot of the marsh earth, soft
and rich and alive."

And again, as he sees her at the Christmas dinner with all the farm servants, he ruminates of "her vigor and flame, her quick temper, her free airs - she was really too big for these people; and yet she was so essentially one with them ... their roots mingled in the same soil, the rich, damp, hardy soil of the marsh."2

<sup>1&</sup>quot;Joanna Godden" by Sheila Kaye-Smith. Page 93. 2 Ibid. Page 103.

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<sup>&</sup>quot;Towns Godden" by Shelle Maye-Solth. Fere 30.

Throughout the novel Joanna bears out these impressions of Martin's. When her life is wrecked by Martin's death, she turns to the farm as a solace for her grief. There she works harder than ever and is more domineering and quick tempered than before. Only one old lady realizes that these unpleasant outward demonstrations mask a broken heart.

Another blow awaits Joanna in her disappointment in her sister, Ellen, around whom she has centered her hopes and affection, for Ellen creates a scandal by deserting her husband, Joanna's rejected suitor, and by running away to the continent with a lover. Again Joanna's sturdiness comes to the fore. She receives Ellen back and faces the gossipping neighbors with courage and calm. She does not minimize Ellen's action in forsaking the devoted Arthur, but scolds and reproaches her. Joanna's honesty makes her admit to herself, however, that she understands Ellen's temptations. It is Joanna's strength that enables Ellen to rebuild her life.

When Joanna realizes that she is almost forty and that life has passed her by, she falls in love with a young man many years her junior. She is attracted to him through his fancied resemblance to the dead Martin. Unlike Martin, he is a moral weakling with no roots, an utterly selfish and spoiled young man. As soon as Joanna discovers his lack of principles and his utter superficiality, she decides not to marry him, for she feels herself more capable of coping with her unborn child without the handicap of a worthless husband.

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When Joanna Looks to Ellen for sympathy, she finds her utterly intolerant. After Joanna has prayed to God to forgive the sin she feels that she has committed, she faces life with confidence and even with joy. She is glad that she is to have a child even though its coming means giving up the farm to which she has devoted her life. She knows that she can provide for her own.

Elizabeth Drew says of "Joanna Godden":

l"'Joanna Godden' is the epic of woman's strength, of the stability and steadfastness of character which incarnates the vitality and simpleness of the land itself. Joanna has no education and no sophistication, she is tactless and bumptious, she has a loud voice, a truculent manner, and a barbaric taste in dress, yet she remains one of the most lovable personalities in modern fiction.'"

2"And finally, nearly forty years old, to turn her back on the life and heritage which have made her what she is, her lover, her sister, her farm, her home, her good name all cost; but holding in her heart, as her dear fields held, the imperishable quality of solidity and endurance, a certain elemental and unshakable faithfulness."

It is a fact to be regretted that Sheila Kaye-Smith wrote a sequel entitled "Joanna Godden Married" for in this novel she lost the fine flavor of the earlier one. She rescued Joanna

<sup>1&</sup>quot;The Modern Novel" by Elizabeth Drew. Page 129.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Page 132.

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In Joseph Godden' to the cute of women's straugth, of the stability and steedingtoness of coeracter which incornates the vitality and simpleness of the land itself. Joseph has no addention and no scottion, she is teatless and bumplions, she has a lord votes, a truculent manner, and a barbario baste in dress, yet as a remains one of the most lovable personalities to modern fiction."

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l'Twe podern Lovel' by Elizabeth Drew. Page 129.

from her difficulties by having her marry a ship-wrecked sailor whom she nursed back to health on a farm far removed from Ansdore. She sentimentalized Joanna and in so doing removed her from the soil and lost the feeling of the land from the novel.

"Wild Geese" by Martha Ostenso is a swiftly moving novel of the Canadian Northwest. On the surface it might appear that the book was a melodramatic tale rather than a novel of the soil, for Caleb Gare, the chief character, strikes terror to the hearts of his wife and children much in the manner of the traditional smoothly spoken villain of the melodrama. Caleb Gare's passion, however, is not for gold or for women, but for the land. Grant Overton in "The Women Who Make Our Novels" says of him:

l"Caleb Gare is the most prosperous farmer in Oeland, but that is because the soil has imbued him with its own terrible tenacity. His one passion is for more land. His wife unprotesting for the sake of her son and first born, who is not Caleb's child ---- and his children are held in thrall by the power of his personality and are to him merely slaves in the task he has set his heart upon."

Instead of finding beauty and strength in the soil, Caleb Gare had taken on only its harsh enduring qualities. In conquering its barrenness and causing it to produce a remarkable field of flax, he felt the only satisfaction possible for him to experience in life. All the love he was capable of was lavished upon this field, and this field betrayed him, for he went down to

<sup>&</sup>quot;The Women Who Make Our Novels" by Grant Overton. P. 249.

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his death in attempting to extinguish a fire in the flax. Thus with the flax, he became a part of the earth once more - a villain born of the earth returning to the earth.

Upon completion of the book, the reader feels the soundness of Mr. Overton's comments when he says of "Wild Geese":

l"A good deal of the old Greek feeling envelopes the story, the feeling that a divine justice is somehow at work to right human wrongs and punish human evils."

Closely linked with this feeling is the reader's consciousness throughout the book of the sinister power of the soil.

"Time of Man" by Elizabeth Madox Roberts may be considered a novel of the soil, since its heroine Ellen Chesser is as much a child of the soil as is Joanna Godden. Ellen, however, finds poetry in the earth as well as the enduring qualities which Joanna found, and consequently, one discovers in Ellen a richness of imagination which endowes her with a beauty of character lacking in the sturdy Joanna.

One of the first impressions which the reader gains of Ellen is given when she is shown as a "lousy brat" of fourteen, treading the plowed earth with her bare feet and casting the "baccer" plants in rows for the men following to fix in the earth. Ellen appears as much a part of the soil as the plants themselves.

Out-of-doors, she is as much at home as the animals, as the pony with which she plays or the cows which she milks. Often the poetry of the earth wells up in her, for when lying in the field

<sup>1&</sup>quot;The Women Who Make Our Novels" by Grant Overton. P. 249.

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overlooking the farm where her father is working she muses:

l"Warm smells a-steamen up and a lark a-singen when he hopped up on a snag tree and Pappy a-whistlen when the team goes down the field. A hay field is a good singen place now. But a baccer patch who wants to be a-singen in baccer!"

Again, when she is sitting in a clover patch:

2"It's pretty stuff, clover a-growen. And in myself I know I'm lovely. It's unknowen how beautiful I am. I'm Ellen and I'm lovely"

As she grows older, Ellen continues to accept life as a natural force. She is still aware of the sun and of the rain. She is impressed with each detail of her small world, and is sensitive to the beauty of growing things, of cultivated fields, and of rolling hills. She rejoices constantly in the fact that she is alive. At times, when the burden of unceasing toil depresses her, she ponders upon the meaning of life and wonders why man keeps on and on, wearing himself out in his task of cultivating the soil which will live on while he must die. These wonderings, however, are superseded by her consciousness that she is alive and "unknowen how lovely" she is.

She accepts marriage naturally and bears her children with satisfaction and joy. She recognizes her husband's faults, but realizes that to be happy she must tolerate them as she does her own. His unfaithfulness she finds almost impossible to forgive,

<sup>1&</sup>quot;Time of Man" by E. M. Roberts. Page 18. 2 Ibid. Page 65.

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but the death of a child brings Ellen and Jasper together.

Ellen rises to her greatest heights when masked men appear to lynch Jasper Kent as a barn burner. After beating him cruelly, they have carried him out of doors. Then Ellen appears. The narrative reads:

l"She walked out of the house, her bare feet sinking into the cold mud, her night garment limp against her body as she went swiftly through the damp air. She walked into the circle and stood in the bare space left for the whips, and her coming was so headlong that blows fell upon her shoulders and breast before she was seen. She came with hard words and deep malediction, laying curse upon curse, speaking into the black rag faces without fear, careless of what came to her for it."

After the lynchers have fled before her dignity and wrath, she cares for her husband and restores him to consciousness. The next evening at midnight, the family load all their possessions upon a wagon and start for distant fields where Jasper may begin life again. Although her plans for years have been thwarted, Ellen moves on to a "far piece" with the same courage that Joanna showed in the face of her misfortunes, an endurance born of the soil.

Elizabeth M. Roberts has made the reader aware of the stony soil from which the chief characters in the novel derive their chary living. "Time of Man" does not, however, emphasize the economic problems of the tenant farmers, but shows Mr. Chesser

l"Time of Man" by E. M. Roberts. Page 376.

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Intere of san' by t. T. hoberts. Page 376.

and the other farmers accepting their lot as tillers of the earth and finding it good to produce crops from the stubborn earth.

"As the Earth Turns" by Gladys Hasty Carroll records the events in the Shaw family for one year during which they experience the fundamental realities in life - marriage, birth, and death. The lives of the Shaws are regulated by the seasonal changes, for each season has its appointed tasks. In spite of the farm tasks, however, these Maine people do not bear the imprint of drudgery as do so many of the prairie farmer folk.

Three characters in the novel are obviously lovers of the soil since to each it brings satisfaction to such an extent that each appears rooted in the soil. These characters are Mark Shaw, Jen Shaw, and Stan Janowski.

The chief interests in Mark Shaw's life are his home and his farm. He likes nothing better than having all the children and grandchildren under his roof. Even the fact that his first wife and his son are buried near the Shaw home is comforting to him. He is so efficient in performing his farm chores and in supervising his farm helpers that the work does not seem so arduous that he has aged under it. He is as silent and unobtrusive as are some New England farmers. Consequently, he does not prate of his love for his children or for the soil, but one is aware of how much both mean to him. He is so much overcome by emotion at the time of Ralph's death that he has Jen make all the funeral arrangements and after Ralph's burial, he goes immediately to work in one of the fields, for in working in the earth he can find

the second state and thought sures and have co-been the state of the second section of the second seco as a sector at a term of the transfer of the sector of the and the selectification and other companies of the field and when the part field provides from the traffe and a traffe of the state of the attinution and a second of the second of consolation and strength.

Jen Shaw is much like her father in her love for her home and the land. The simple life close to the earth which she has known always brings her a satisfaction not felt by her stepmother or George's wife. She enjoys household tasks and loves children. Her love for the soil does not come as a result of tilling it, but because it represents her home, an abiding place for those whom she loves. She understands the soil and from it draws a quiet strength that makes her charitable and understanding. She is above the petty gossip of the village and has a broad point of view. She accepts the new, although she does not always understand it. She feels herself so bound to the land, though, that when she is attracted to Stan and knows that he will go out of her life if he leaves the farm to return to the city with his family, she does not importune him to remain. She must test him to see if his soul like hers is bound up with the earth.

With Stan Janowski, who is of Polish extraction, the love for the soil seems to be inherited, perhaps from forbears much like Reymont's peasants. Stan, however, is not a man of hot passions or an unlettered son of the earth. He is more cultured than his family, and he is of a contemplative nature. He likes living close to the earth, which challenges him to produce a livelihood. He enjoys laboring on the farm, for in his work he finds beauty. Away from the rush of cities, he can think and in the evening, he can play his violin or his accordion. He enjoys elemental people like Jen who attracts him for her sturdiness

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or Agorge's wife. The enjoys household thake and loves of liftyer show are loves. She understands the soil and from it draws a ods . Arthreterebnu bre aldellrano and salem Jert diamente Jalup ressions or an unlettered son of the surth. He is nove to thered theed. . He smillys laboring on the form, for to bis work he first end wi box which one on seities to dark end mout your . Truse vening, as our oler his violim or his according. He solory

and her love for her home and for children, and who would be glad to have children of her own. He finds it difficult to stay behind when his family seek the city, but his love for the earth constrains him to carry on the farm and it is this love of the land that wins for him Jen's love.

In some novels of the soil, the earth becomes so important that it assumes the role of a character.

"Barren Ground" by Ellen Glasgow is the story of Dorinda
Oakley whose life is wrecked by an unfortunate love affair until,
challenged by the earth, she conquers the soil and through her
victory finds the significance of life. Thus, the soil plays
the part of the hero in curing the heroine of her feelings of
frustration in life. These ideas may be explained more clearly
by an examination of the story and quotations from the novel.

As a girl Dorinda Oakley, the daughter of a middle class
Virginia farmer, felt herself, at times, a part of the soil.
Once when she was pausing on the edge of the woods where she was
to meet her lover, the author says of Dorinda:

l"While she stood there, she was visited by a swift perception, which was less a thought than a feeling and less a feeling than an intuitive recognition, that she and her parents were products of the soil as veritable as were the scant crops and exuberant broom-sedge. Had not the land entered into their souls and shaped their moods into permanent or impermanent forms? Less a thought than a feeling; but she went on more rapidly toward the

<sup>1&</sup>quot;Barren Ground" by Ellen Glasgow. Page 93.

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complete joy of the moment in which she lived."

Dorinda, however, did not ally herself with the soil, but felt in it a challenging force that she must conquer in order that it might yield her a livelihood. Even in New York where she attempted to forget her love affair with Jason, when she found the farm luring her back she returned to conquer it with much the same spirit as that of a soldier going to battle. It was the zest of the fight that she must wage that absorbed her. She had seen the barren land beat her father, and she was determined that she would gain a victory over the stubborn earth.

Many years after, when through unremitting toil she had been the means of restoring fertility to the earth on her farm and had been able to buy the farm of Jason Greylock, the lover who had betrayed her, and had caused it, too, to produce, she chanced to meet Jason, who remarked that she had done well with the farm because she had put her heart into it.

"'Not the heart, but the head,'" she retorted sharply, as she went past him into the cabin.

Five years later, however, after the death of Jason, Dorinda realized that the thirty years of toil upon the land had brought their reward in that the land had become a part of her and, in absorbing her, had wiped out the years of unhappiness in which she had felt her spirit crushed. Now after thirty years, she had found herself and was happy again.

1"The spirit of the land was flowing into her, and her own

1"Barren Ground" by Ellen Glasgow. Page 93.

". Day II erts dotten at tasmon said to yot stelpade."

Hopinds, however, did not ally remealf with the soil, but felt in it a chellenging force that also much conquer in order that it might yield her a livelihood. Even in New York where she attempted to forget her large large affair with Jeson, when she found the farm luring her back she returned to conquer it with much the sens spirit as that of a soldier going to bettle. It was the rest of the fight that she must were that absorbed her. She had seen the betten land best her father, and she was determined that she would gein a victory over the stubborn earth.

Many years after, when through unremitting toll she had been the means of restanting fertility to the sarth on her form and had been able to buy the ferm of Jason Breylou. The lover who had betrryed her, and had caused it, too, to produce, also chanced to meet Jason, and remarked that are had done well with the fare because and ted not her heart into it.

"" Mot the heart, but the boad, " she retorked sharply, as

Five years leter, however, after the death of Jeson, Dorind realized that his birthy years of Lail upon the lend had brought thair reward to that the lend had become a park of her aid, in absorbing nor, had wiped out the years of unhappiness in which are hed found herself and was hepty wrein.

own red bid area oand selwoll see bust sid to slotge edl"!

<sup>&</sup>quot;Barrer Urcund" by Ellen Glasrow. Hare 95.

spirit strengthened and refreshed, was flowing out again toward life. This was the permanent self, she knew. This was what remained to her after years had taken away their bloom. would find happiness again. Not the happiness for which she had once longed, but the serenity of mind which is above the conflict of frustrated desires. Old regrets might awaken again, but as the years went on, they would come rarely and they would go weaker. 'Put your heart in the land,' old Matthew had said to her. 'The land is the only thing that will stay by you.' Yes, the land would stay by her. Her eyes wandered from far horizon to horizon. Again she felt the quickening of that sympathy which was deeper than all other emotions of her heart, which love had overcome only for an hour and life had been powerless to conquer in the end: - the living communion with the earth under her feet. While the soil endured, while the seasons bloomed and dropped, while the ancient, beneficent ritual of sowing and reaping moved in the the fields, she knew that she could never despaire of contentment."

"Prairie" by Walter J. Muilenberg is a novel of the soil, since the prairie earth is a constructive force in the life of Elias Vaughn, while it is a disintegrating force in the life of his wife Lizzie. To Elias the prairie is the most vital thing in life. To cultivate the acres means to him a daily adventure. Although impassive and unemotional in his contacts with people, he senses in the prairie the beauty of plowed fields, the purple haze of prairie landscapes, and the banks of wild flowers. The

ted was the permanent self, she knew. This was what ers. . woold afeds yeve neded bed greet adis ted of benisher could find happiness again. Not too negoiness for which are he of frustrated desires. Old regrets might swelled stain, but as er. 'Pat your reart in the land,' old Matthew had said to her. The land to one only thing that will stay by you. ' Yes, the land would stay by her. . ser eyes wandered from far borleon to tentment."

"Freirie" by Walter J. Mullenberg is a novel of the soil, alone the prefrie acres to the life of files the prefrie to a disintegration force in the life of files Vaughn, while it is a disintegration force in the life of the wife Lizzia. To files the prefrie is the most witel tolone in life. To cultivate the acres means to bim a delly idvanture although impassive and memorionel in his contects with people, he senses in the prefrie the beauty of plowed fields, the purple head of prefrie landscapes, and the beauty of wild flowers. The

lone someness of his acres holds for him a benediction. He is satisfied to have a wife and a child, but he is more content to cultivate the earth. He accepts the catastrophes of life philosophically, since he knows that nature is no respecter of persons and that drought and flood are as much a part of natural law as the life principle itself. The prairie has taught him this philosophy. Occasionally the feels the urge of something apart from the soil that is greater, perhaps, than the soil. It is this urge that drives him to sending his son to school even though his wife is opposed to having Joe educated. Though the prairie is the most potent force in his life, Elias is loyal to Lizzie even when her mind has become affected and he closes his home to Joe because the latter whom his mother idolized, had not returned to see her until it was too late. Although the prairie has meant everything to Elias, he is a sad picture at the end, for by tightening its hold upon him, the prairie has left him without human contacts, and one feels that when he is too feeble to cultivate the prairie, life will hold little for him.

To Lizzie the prairie is a disintegrating force. From the first, she feels a vague distrust of the wide flung acres. Soon after her arrival, she urges Elias to return to the East, for she can not bear the quiet loneliness of the new life. For a while after the birth of her son, she finds life endurable, but after she has lost her second baby, she feels no interest in life but to return East to escape the subtle threatening of the prairie lands. Even after a visit home, she feels the same dissatis-

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faction and vague fears. Finally her discontent so preys upon her spirits that her mind begins to fail. She becomes more and more childlike until she is seized by a wasting disease. The prairie so filled with beauty for Elias has caused her death.

"Prairie" is a novel of the soil, but it is not a very significant one, for it lacks vitality. The prairie, while it influences the lives of the chief characters, does not seem like a rugged force. The comment of a reviewer in the New York Times is a fair one when he says: "The book challenges comparison with Hamsun but has no outstanding beauty."

"Heritage" by Rosa C. Feld is undoubtedly a novel of the soil since the land acts as a powerful force in the life of Sarah Weatherby, obliterating her more tender qualities and causing her to make her family slaves to the earth. Thus the land triumphs over Sarah and causes dissatisfaction in the life of Ernest, her son, who feels such a love for the farm that he can not break away from it.

Sarah Weatherby's love for the soil exceeded that which she felt for any human being. She married Joel simply that she might know the joy of cultivating the farm. When she had sons, she felt no maternal affection for the children, but rejoiced that there were two boys who might join her in tilling the earth. The son who inherited her love for the soil, but to a lesser degree, for this love was secondary to the love he felt for his wife, Sarah bound to the farm by forcing her husband to leave the farm to Ernest only upon her death. Thus, the plot of the novel, which

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concerned the lives of Sarah, Ernest and his wife, and later

Ernest's son Lucian and his wife, was centred upon the possession

of the farm.

Sarah Weatherby's love for the soil made her extremely hard. Like the stony earth, she resisted all the softening influences that entered her life. She steeled herself against Ernest's wife Rachel, who was a most affectionate girl, because although she was a capable worker, she liked to sing and dance, to eat well-cooked food, and shower love upon her father and mother. To enjoy recreational pleasures or to show emotion were cardinal offences in Sarah's eyes. Sarah herself was as unvielding as a rocky pasture, for she never changed her mind or accepted another's opinion or advice. Once the hardness in her nature was the means of her saving Rachel's life since it caused her to risk her own in order to suck diseased membranes from Rachel's throat, just as Rachel was choking to death. Her motive here was not affection for Rachel, but the farm's need of her. As years went by, Sarah's love for tilling the soil turned into the satisfaction of possessing the farm. Because she owned it, she could dominate the life of Ernest and later of Lucian, her grandson, for neither could break away without losing the means of livelihood to which he had devoted his life. The one redeeming characteristic in Sarah was her love for tilling the earth, and when her feeling for the land became transformed to a lust for owning it, the reader could feel for her nothing except a strong dislike.

While in Sarah's case the earth was a hardening influence,

concerned the lives of cores, Erresh and his wife, and later consequent sense and the messages of the farm.

relies has questal der comp evel vewers has sone bashos-lier. angelle das caw enen ertico reil .ndesh mi totalo saw leiget en tion for encess, but the farm's need of hors. As mare as t by. ne bid damated is the. " . . . our radeaning characteristic in to Ernest, her son, it brought the satisfaction that he should have derived from a mother's affection. As he was growing up, he rejoiced yearly in watching the awakening earth and in feeling it respond to his plow. The fact that he might some day possess the particular farm that he knew and loved like a friend gave him satisfaction in the drudging daily toil. He had been given to understand that the farm would be his at his father's death, and when he discovered his mother's deception, he lost much of his joy in the earth. Love for his wife and the consciousness of the burden that living with his mother imposed upon her destroyed his affection for the earth, and farm work instead of bringing him satisfaction became the means by which he earned his livelihood.

Thus, in "Heritage" the soil played the part of a villain first, by binding to the farm Sarah Weatherby, her son and her grandson, and second, by moulding the lives of the two characters who loved the soil into harsh, unlovely patterns.

"Red Rust" by Cornelia J. Cannon is a genuine novel of the soil in that the wheat is the hero of the novel. Matt Swenson, ostensibly the hero, is a Minnesota farmer of Swedish descent.

Matt's keenest desire in life is to produce a species of wheat that will resist the fatal disease, "red rust". To this purpose he works with untiring energy. His love for the wheat and his devotion to it do not blind him to human relationships. His nature is sympathetic and kindly. He marries his wife and assumes the care of five foster children because he feels affection for

To Names! Not son, it brounds the satisfication test in example in the derived from a content's effection. In one was considered positive rate derived from a matching the entire south and to resting it respond to his place. The fact that he might some day posses the profit cular fact that no new and layed like a friend reve by satisfaction in the drudging delly toil. We had been given to understand that the face would be his at his fitteria dead, and when he discovered his mother's deaption, he lost maps of his in the death. Low for his with his mother impress upon the death.

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them and knows they need the care that he can provide. The wheat, however, does hold the first place in his heart, and to perfect it means a life, a sacrifice of money, of time, and of labor. After suffering failure and ridicule, Matt succeeds in producing wheat that will withstand "red rust". The poignant tragedy in the novel is that he dies before he knows of his victory, while his perfect wheat, the real hero, and the product that has sapped his strength through his unremitting labor, lives on. Thus, Matt has proved himself a kind of Sidney Carton who has sacrificed his life for the soil.

Soil is at the heart of H. W. Freeman's "Joseph and His Brethren", since it dominated the life of Benjamin Geaiter and his sons. Its influence upon the plot may be shown by R. H. Mottram's comments in the introduction:

l"There is a great deal of talk about the depletion of the countryside, the hard plight of farmers, and what is to be done about it. Mr. Freeman pays no more heed than old Benjamin Geaiter or his sons would have done. His business is with Joseph and his brethren - or, more exactly, with their business, for they have no existence apart from Grakenhill Farm. That unromantic dwelling, its barn, outhouses, yard and hundred acres of evenly divided pasture and arable, to which a further hundred acres were laboriously added, nearly lost, and finally restored, is the real 'hero' of the book."

That this last statement is true is evident from the begin-

<sup>1&</sup>quot;Joseph and His Brethren" by H. W. Freeman. Page VIII.

Soil is at the bear of a. .. Product: "Losein and ... or Scattered and ... or Scattered and ... or scattered and the itio of Scatterin destine und. ... or scattered and the old or the scattered and the scattere

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ning of the novel. The farm makes an important entrance into the novel because in the opening scene the death of Emily Geaiter occurs while she is assisting in freeing the land from twich, a particularly stubborn weed. The farm assumes importance for being indirectly responsible for the death of a hard worked woman. Then the reader watches the cultivation and fortunes of a hero. He learns that at one time Crakenhill Farm had been the most unpromising piece of land in the country until Benjamin Geaiter had purchased it and assisted by his sturdy sons and his wife, had made it productive and doubled its acreage.

Throughout the book the reader traces the fortunes of this flourishing land. Occasionally it is threatened with minor catastrophes, as when, to escape the tyrannical Benjamin, Bob and Hiram decide to go to Canada. They start off boldly, with visions of attaining independence and cultivating fertile acres in a new country, but before they have traveled fifty miles, the sight of farming country less productive than their own and of ill favored and poorly cared for horses and cattle dispel their dreams. In spite of their fear of facing their father, they returned to rejoice in the farm and in their part in carrying on its work. Again, Ern, the son who is needed to care for the stock, decides to enlist in the Queen's service. On the very threshold of the recruiting office, he is lured back by thoughts of the farm, and runs away to travel on foot many miles to Crakenhill.

A more wholesale catastrophe threatens the farm when, after Benjamin's tardy marriage to Nance, the sons know that she will

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inherit the farm at Benjamin's death, and they nearly decide to leave Crakenhill and earn independent incomes of their own.

Crakenhill is threatened more seriously after Benjamin's death, for then Nance marries a shiftless man, who runs through her property, and she is forced to sell the farm. The brothers decide, however, to get it back for Joseph, Nance's son and their half-brother, and as tenants hire it again. Nance allows Joseph, who loves the farm, to leave her and live with his brothers. As Joseph grows older, however, he rebels against the monotony of the labor on the farm and is attracted by a wandering circus in which he obtains a chance to ride a bucking broncho. Before he has gone far, like his brothers in years past, he is overcome with homesickness, and upon hearing the swish of a scythe, he abandons his plans and retraces his way home.

A more serious crisis so far as Crakenhill is concerned, though, occurs when Joseph announces that his sweetheart Daisy will not marry him unless he promises to live in the city, for Daisy, who has been city bred, dislikes farm life and has no intention of becoming a farmer's wife. Then to save Crakenhill, the brothers, led by Ben, form the most desperate conspiracy of which they are capable. Solemnly they invite Daisy to tea and with dignity and pride they display their home and their acres. Daisy, impressed against her will with the comfort and security of the farm and with her position as mistress at Crakenhill, decides in favor of the farm.

At the end of the novel, the most serious catastrophe threat-

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ens Crakenhill, because Daisy has tired of the drudgery and drabness of farm life. She receives an offer to manage a millinery shop in the city, and she contemplates accepting a chance to free herself from the narrow life of the soil. Again, Ben, by his understanding of her feelings, unwittingly influences her to refuse the offer. Thus, Crakenhill wins its final victory.

In addition to being the centre of the plot, the soil has a decided effect upon the characters of Joseph and his brethren. Benjamin Geaiter and his sons are much like the Hebrew patriarchs in their feeling for the land. They need no outside contacts, for to make stubborn soil productive is adventure enough. They feel a sense of achievement and of triumph when the fields are ploughed well, when sour land, through their efforts, has been made sweet, and when the farm animals are well cared for and thrive. On Sunday afternoons, they enjoy the sight of their fertile acres. With the exception of Joseph, their affection is centred upon the earth which they love not because it yields them material gain, but because the cultivation of it brings them satisfaction and contentment. Benjamin Geaiter, the father, who feels the fiercest love for the soil, and who suggests stony earth in his harsh domineering ways is the most outstanding character in the novel. It seemed fitting that his death should occur out-of-doors on the land to which he had devoted his life.

"Tharlane" by Dorothy Cottrell is a novel of the soil, laid in Southwestern Australia. "Tharlane", an immense tract of savage country, is really the hero. Fascinated by the thousand

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square miles of bush which had defied man and caused the death of pioneers who had attempted to conquer it, Henry Bart Henrics determined he would make the land habitable and productive. In this purpose he might appear to be no different from an ordinary pioneer, but "H.B.", as he was known, looked upon the land as a force stronger than he and one that he must overcome or die in the attempt. Human contacts held little significance for him, for the land absorbed him completely. Sometimes his methods were unscrupulous, but he succeeded in his purposes, for he freed the country of kangaroos, the great enemy of the crops, controlled with a scientific knowledge the diseases of sheep and of plants, and devised a system of irrigation by which he conquered drouth, the most powerful enemy of all. "Tharlane" demanded great tasks of "H.B.", and he fulfilled them all. Once, however, he had allowed a man to be imprisoned upon circumstantial evidence for an assault upon him. Upon learning of the man's innocence, H. B. had not had him freed, since he was not sure enough of his place in the community and feared the knowledge that he had allowed an innocent man to be imprisoned in the first place would jeopardize "Tharlane". At the end of twenty-nine years the wronged man returned and by setting fire to "Tharlane" destroyed all H. B.'s work as well as his life, for he perished in his attempt to extinghish the fire.

"H.B.", a rather unprepossessing character in himself, achieved a victory in conquering "Tharlane", even though it was lost in the end, for the struggle developed in him resources which would

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have lain dormant. His life was richer with each victory over the woil, for each time he realized that life was not so futile as he had often imagined it to be and that the zest of conquest was significant even on "the plains of the sun" for such was the meaning of the word "Tharlane".

"Now in November" by Josephine Johnson, is a novel of the soil, but in a more intangible sense than any discussed previously. Since drought, the demon of the soil, hangs over a family and controls its destiny, the unfertile soil assumes the role of a malevolent fate from which the Haldmarnes can not escape.

The novel recounts one year in the life of the family, a year filled with frustrated hopes. For nine years the Haldmarnes have struggled along on the farm and have scarcely been able to make a living. During this tenth year the mother, exhausted by a constant struggle with poverty, dies, a victim of cancer, the existence of which she suspected but could not have had treated on account of poverty. Kerrin, the oldest daughter, worn out with the struggle to live becomes insane and commits suicide. Marget, who tells the story, falls in love with Grant, the man who helps her father. Grant, however, has fallen in love with her sister, Merle. With the failure of the crops because of the drought, Mr. Haldmarne's hopes for success are blasted, and the book ends on a hopeless key with the surviving members of the family facing poverty.

"Now in November" is a real novel of the soil since the reader feels that the unfertile soil is the cause of the family's tragedies and that by failing in its function to produce, it has mould-

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"Now in November" is a real novel of the entl since the restreals that the unforbile soil is the cause of the Paully's treatidies and that by Pallins in the function to produce, it has mont ed human destinies.

"Sun on Their Shoulders" by Elizabeth Eastman is a novel of the soil centered in an old man's love for his cranberry bogs.

Just as Matt Swenson's interest in life was perfect wheat, so Heikki Ranta's is his peerless cranberry bogs. His love for his bogs can be sensed in the following quotation.

l"He knelt down on the heavy vines and laid his hands softly on the tiny points of vine taps, caressing them; whispered to them and did not know that he was whispering, words without meaning like, 'how much more than the thickness of them' and, 'that is enough for me; this is certainly more than enough.'"

In the beauty of the bogs Heikki found the beauty of life and in caring for them and saving them, complete satisfaction. Because the bogs have such a meaning for him, Heikki feels sure that they will be a beneficient influence in the lives of his sons and will challenge them to more purposeful lives. Therefore, he sells the bogs to his sons, who betray him by selling to the man from whom he bought them originally. All summer Heikki labors over the bogs and rejoices more than ever in their beauty and productiveness. When he discovers they are not his sons! property, his mind breaks under the strain, and he reverts to the time when as a young man, he purchased his first strip of swamp. Thus, so far as the plot is concerned, the bogs which have been his greatest joy, cause his undoing. The bogs are made so important that they assume the role of a character, and

<sup>1&</sup>quot;Sun on Their Shoulders" by Elizabeth Eastman. Page 34.

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"Ent on Trate Enoulders" by Elizabeth Basher, to a movel of the soil dentered in an old man's love for his dentered to an old man's love for his dentered, not the was perfect wheat, so not that hants's is his perfect an orangency norm. His love for h's bore den be sensed in the following quotetion.

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thus justify "Sun on Their Shoulders" as a real novel of the soil.

Before discussing the following books, it is expedient to consider Knut Hamsun's "Growth of the Soil" since the remaining novels reflect the influence of this work. For that reason these last books have not been arranced in chronological order.

Hamsun's "Growth of the Soil" was, perhaps, the first real novel of the soil, for it was the first book in which the soil was so important that it seemed the center of the plot as well as the most important factor in the lives of the characters. Traces of the soil had been found in Willa Cather's "O Pioneers" and "My Antonia" in that the characters depicted seemed indigenous to the soil, but in neither of these novels is the soil the controlling force that it is in "Growth of the Soil". Egdon Heath in "The Return of a Native" had the same type of pervading force, but in the case of Egdon Heath, it was the age of the land and its Druidical associations that affected the lives of the characters. In novels like "Growth of the Soil" it is the productive quality of the soil that affects the lives of the characters.

To explain these ideas it is necessary to examine the novel in more detail. In the first part of "Growth of the Soil" that depicts Isak's taking his land, constructing his house of turf, housing his beasts and feeling the need of a woman to complete his life, the man and soil appear inseparable, so closely are they linked: Isak might be the first man; Inger, the first woman. So content are they with the earth and its products they feel no longing for Eden.

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Throughout his life Isak is bound to the earth. When he prospers, he is glad that the soil has yielded him enough to purchase comforts for his wife and children and that he can erect more buildings upon his farm. With prosperity he does not forget his debt to the soil, which is constantly in the background of his consciousness. Although civilization encroaches upon his domain and he becomes rich through the sale of a copper mine upon his land, Isak does not change his manner of living. The mine is worked out, the settlers move away, and Isak is seen much as at the beginning, except that there are many buildings upon his farm, and he has several children.

Although at first Inger, his wife, seemed much like Isak, contact with the city where she is imprisoned for strangling her child whom she had killed rather than have it suffer the disfigurement of a hare lip, causes her to feel dissatisfied with the soil. Never after her return from Tronjheim is she fully content with farm life. Material prosperity does not satisfy her, for the loneliness of the farm depresses her. She turns to religion for consolation, but to Isak the soil takes the place of religion. In the end he is shown at his sowing: "a stump of a man, a barge of a man to look at, nothing more. Clad in homespun-wool from his own sheep, boots from the hide of his own cows and calves, a tiller of the ground, body and soul; a worker on the land without respite. A ghost risen out of the past to point the future, a man from the earliest days of cultivation, a settler in

<sup>1&</sup>quot;Growth of the Soil"by Knut Hamsun. Page 252.

Involvent of the life lost is bound to the serth. Then he can all prospers, to is all that the soil has yielded him enough to our aroot aleas conforts for his wife and a lidren and that he are aroot one cuildings upon his farm. Alth prosperity he does not forded his constitute to the soil, which is constantly in the background of his conscinueness. Although of villigation enougher sine upon his double and he background the sale of a copper sine upon the land, lask does not cause his manner of living. The wine has land, the farm, and he beginning, except that there are many buildings upon its fall to beginning, except that there are many buildings upon its fall to beginning, except that there are many buildings upon its

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the wilds, nine hundred years old, and withal, a man of the day.

The foregoing quotation is an example of Hamsun's rich and forceful style. In the novels of the soil to follow, there is the combination of the soil as a central force affecting plot and characters, and an epic style reminiscent of Hamsun.

"The Good Earth" by Pearl Buck depicts a hero in whose life the earth is as potent a force as it is in the life of Isak.

The earth controls the destiny of Wang Lung. To him it is more than a means of sustenance; it is a spiritual force in which he finds consolation. Like Antaeus of old, when he is removed from the soil, he loses strength. By being the motive power behind the hero, the soil is at the centre of the plot.

The novel opens with Wang Lung's wedding day when he takes from the House of Hwang, a slave girl, O-Lan, to be his wife. In addition to satisfying all the Chinese traditions of what a wife should be, O-Lan brings Wang Lung greatest joy in the fact that she shares his labors in the fields. She feels the same love. for the soil as he and the same pride in its productiveness. So much does tilling the earth mean to the simple and childlike O-Lan that she leaves off only to bear her children, and in begetting them she regards her own body much as a product of the soil.

When famine forces Wang Lung and O-Lan to leave their land and seek the city, Wang Lung can find no happiness. Always he yearns to return to his farm. At one time his longing for the soil is so great that he is on the point of selling his daughter to retrieve the fortunes of the family. Thus the earth tempts

the wilds, nine hundred ears old, and wishel, a man of the fact the formatter of the sollow, there is formatful style. In the novels of the soil to follow, there is the combination of the soil as a central force affecting plot an absorbers, and an epic style reminiscent of demand.

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him to sacrifice his "poor slave". He is, however, able to obtain gold from a man who has hidden from the bandits and believing Wang Lung one of them, gives him money to spare his life.

With this gold Wang Lung buys an ox, seed, and fertilizer and returns to his farm where he purchases more land. With wisdom, he learns, even as Joseph of old, to protect himself from famine, and in this second venture, he prospers so materially that he becomes a wealthy man. No longer does he till the soil but hires laborers for the work.

Wealthy and separated from his beloved soil, Wang Lung becomes bored with life. He looks for new excitements and in a tea-house he meets a woman with whom he becomes so infatuated that he takes her for his second wife. Lotus Blossom, this wife, proves a deteriorating force in his life, but love for her is cured by his return to the land when the floods have receded. This, again, the land, restores him to a happiness that he cannot find in life with Lotus Blossom.

In the end Wang Lung leaves his fine house to pass his last days in the small earthern house of his birth. Living close to the earth brings him peace, and he awaits death with a calm courage since he is near the earth which he has understood and which has ministered spiritual comfort to him. Gold has never held much significance for him except as a means of purchasing more land. While the earth has proved fruitful and the seasons favorable for harvest, he has derived all the meaning possible from life. As an old man, he is described thus:

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l"Spring passed and summer passed into harvest and in the hot autumn sun before winter comes Wang Lung sat where his father had sat against the wall. And he thought no more about anything except his food and his drink and his land. But of his land he thought no more what harvest it would bring or what seed would be planted or anything except of the land itself, and he stooped sometimes and gathered some of the earth up in his hand and he sat thus, and he thought of it fitfully and of his good coffin that was there; and the kind earth waited without haste until he came to it."

A touch of pathos is felt at the end when Wang Lung's sons, who have never shared to the slightest degree their father's love for the earth, mention the fact that they intend to sell some of the fields. When he overhears this remark, Wang Lung weeps and would have fallen, but his sons assure him that they will not sell the land. They do, however, accompany their words with a smile.

Pearl Buck has invested Wang Lung with the quality of a Biblical patriarch. Like Hamsun's Isak, he embodies all men who
love the soil and who are of it. Thus the novel has a universal
appeal. "The Good Earth", too, like "Growth of the Soil" is epic
in scope.

"Lamb in His Bosom" by Caroline Miller is a novel through which the soil runs like a hidden vein. It plays no startling part in the plot and yet is so bound up with it that the novel sould not exist without it. The novel is primarily one of

<sup>1 &</sup>quot;The Good Earth" by Pearl Buck. Page 373.

"applied passed and summing passed into hervest and in the come without sum bafors whose down know and has defined been concepted to some about anything set against the wall. Had no some about anything as a some about anything as and his drink and his lend. . Dot of his land no thought no more what hervest it would be printed as about a what as about a plantad or more land the sind head the store and he should no some and it is a store of the sindh of the sindh of his cond carries and he thought of the thought of the cond carries and he thought of the thought of his cond carries and he there to the cond carries and he to the there to the cond carries and he to the cond carries and the carries and the cond carries are carries and the cond carries and the carries and the cond carr

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character and each character seems like a part of the earth itself.

The novel is essentially the story of Caen, with whose wedding journey the book opens. The journey, to be sure, consists only of a drive of several miles between the cabins of Caen's parents and the cabin Lonzo has built for Caen. In her delight in every detail of the familiar landscape and in her contentment with her new home, Caen combines a simplicity and serenity that breathe of the soil. The account of the first days of Caen's and Lonzo's married life is epic in the same sense as is Hamsun's picture of the uniting of Inger and Isak.

Throughout her life Caen draws strength from the soil. She never knows such happiness as when, walking over the rich plowed earth, she follows Lonzo and drops four grains of corn into each hill prepared for them. Although she accepts motherhood as woman's lot, she deplores the fact that it deprives her of the joys of working in the soil. She accepts death with the calm philosophy born of a childlike faith in God, and after each loss, she devotes herself with renewed eagerness to the living. After Lonzo's death, she has no time to grieve, but on days when the children are particularly trying, she finds it better that he has been taken and she spared. In her second marriage Caen discovers a different type of joy, for with Dermid O'Connor she feels a spiritual union that she did not have with Lonzo. When Dermit O'Connor goes away to war, Caen is able to manage her life and her children's successfully, and, when he returns from war, a broken old man, she feels, much as Ellen Chesser felt about Jasper Kent, that

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she possesses the courage and strength to restore him, for the soil, always in the background of her consciousness, is her strength.

The first part of "Lamb in His Bosom" is remarkable for the combination of its epic quality and its poetry, but in the last part the reader feels a letting down. Mr. Kronenberger expresses this reaction to the book when he says in the New York Times for September 7, 1933:

"The most serious fault of the novel is that during the last half it dries up. Sap and poetry go out of it, and it becomes prosaic. The birth, deaths, and marriages are no longer rich chunks out of a unique little world, but mere jottings in a parish register."

It is difficult to decide whether "Giants in the Earth" should be included in a dissertation dealing with American and English novels. Although the book was first published in Norwegian, it was written by O. E. Rölvaag, who occupies a chair in St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, and its theme is, of course, American. Consequently, it seems appropriate to include it here.

"Giants in the Earth" is a rich novel of the soil written in a style resembling Hamsun's. The novel, which deals with the struggles and triumphs of the Norwegian pioneer settlers in South Dakota, is more than a novel of pioneering problems. The soil is felt as a subtle, but powerful, force that brings success to Per Hansa and defeat to his wife Beret.

To Per Hansa the soil is challenging and inspiring. It de-

she posiesates the course and strength to restore him, for the soil, sinars in the buckground of her consciousness, is her strength all the first part of "Lemb in its Soson" is remarkable for the combination of its apic quality and its poetry, but in the last part the reader foels a letting down. In the imperser excess that the reader foels a letting down. In the low fork fines for this resettion to the book when he says in the low fork fines for Suptember 7, 1935:

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mands of him the solving of new problems and the pitting of his strength against the forces of nature. He enjoys building his sod house and barn, breaking the land to the plow and meeting such emergencies as rescuing the cattle that have been driven away by the Indians. When he finds himself adequate to mastering the new life, he gains a confidence and satisfaction that he did not feel in Norway. He becomes harder, to be sure, and loses the affectionate playfulness that had endeared him to his wife. Because he is so absorbed with the new life, he cannot understand Beret's aversion to it. He is unable, therefore, to quiet her fears and ease her terrors. As he becomes estranged from her, he turns more and more to the soil, and had he lived longer, he might have found it the only significant force in life.

To Beret the new life so close to the soil is a nightmare.

On the journey across the plains, she feels forebodings and even when she is settled in her new house, she feels that the great prairie is haunted by spectres of loneliness. At night she covers the windows to shut out her fear. A new baby does not bring her peace. Finally her terrors become so great that she turns to religion for consolation. Then she is haunted by a fear of the devil and all his works. By treating her naturally and simply, Per Hansa tries to dispel her terrible fancies, but he is unsuccessful. Her insistence that a minister be brought to the dying Per Olsa sends Per Hansa, against his better judgment, into a blizzard, and he loses his life in the snow.

Throughout the novel is felt the grim power of the forces in

which of his the solving of new problems and the ditting of his strength equinative forces of news. On enjoys building his and house and bern, breaking the land to the plow and meeting sud energencies as rescuing the cattle that have been driven away by the Indiana. Then he gottes to mastering the new confidence and mathefaction that he did not feel in lorver. On becomes harden, to be aline, and loses the affectionate playfulnest that he degreed his to his wife. Because it is so shooted with the new life, he cannot understand beneticate to it. We is unable, therefore, to quiet her fairs and deep for terrors. As he is species attended from her, he turns found it the only stanificant from her her her safet have end note to the sail, and hed he lived loaner, he wight have found it the only stanificant from he in its.

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nature that govern the soil, and are too strong for man's control.

In Malvina Hoffman's "Heads and Tales", the author relates an experience that revealed to her the significance of life:

l"Walking along a narrow board-walk across a wide deeply plowed field, I saw that the tender new shoots of oats had started to force their way up through the heavy clods of earth. Pushing against stones and rough roots, the delicate new life sprang forth against the blade-like fire of the sun. Yesterday I only felt their buried potentiality; today the miracle had been achieved - the heaviness of earth had been cloven asunder - the spring had overcome the winter and life was glowing again in streams. Fecundity of nature giving forth new visions to man, new hope, new beauty born of pain; sorrow and even bitterness turned under the sod to enrich the next cycle of experience."

It is the quality embodied in this experience that the author of a truly great novel of the soil should ensuare and impress upon the hearts and the minds of his readers.

l"Heads and Tales" by Malvina Hoffman. Page 392.

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neture that govern the sold, and are too strong for mentan continued to the column persons of the author persons

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## CONCLUSIONS

Although one has been aware for several years that the novel of the soil is a recognized form in modern literature, it is surprising to discover that approximately fifty American and English novels, easily accessible to the reader, have been published in the years 1921 through 1934.

Obviously it is illogical to consider this unwieldly number as one group of novels of the soil. A careful study reveals the fact that these novels are varied and may be classified more specifically according to the relative importance of and the effect of the soil. Thus, the novel in which the farm serves as a background for a tale of romantic or of historical significance, or the novel in which the soil is subordinated to interesting manners and customs, or the novel in which the soil becomes an economic problem affecting the characters' lives, or even, the novel in which the soil is of some significance in the lives of characters, should be differentiated from the real novel of the soil.

The real novel of the soil may be defined as one in which the soil is a vital force because the chief characters embody the elements of the soil to such an extent that they seem inseparable from it or because the soil itself assumes the role of a character of such paramount importance is its influence upon plot and character. Of the fifty three novels examined, only

## CONCLUBIALE

Although one has been ewere for several reads that the novel of the soil is a recognized form in modern literature, it is surprising to discover that approximately fifty (markens and English novels, easily accessible to the reader, her has nublished in the rears 1921 through 1924.

fifteen modern American and English novels satisfy these requirements and may be regarded as real novels of the soil.

Among the fifteen novels there may be discovered those in which the soil acts as a constructive force enriching spiritually the lives of the characters. Thus, in "Joanna Godden" one encounters Joanna who draws vitality and strength from the earth. In "Time of Man" Ellen Chesser embodies the beauty and strength which she has derived from the earth. To Mark Shaw, Jen, and Stan Janowski of "As the Earth Turns" the soil brings satisfaction and realization of the significance of life. To Dorinda Oakley in "Barren Ground", the earth is a solace for frustrated love while Per Hansa of "Giants in the Earth" and Elias Vaughn from "Prairie" derive confidence in meeting life and a sense of power from their cultivation of virgin prairie soil. The same sense of power is felt by Benjamin Geaiter and his stalwart sons in "Joseph and His Brethren" in their transformation of an unproduct tive farm to fertile acres, and by "H. B." in "Tharlane" in his conquest of Australian wilderness. To Wang Lung, from "The Good Earth" the soil is as vital as life itself.

In contrast to these characters in whom the soil is an uplifting force there are those characters in whose lives the soil is a destructive power. Among these are Caleb Gare from "Wild Geese", Beret from "Giants in the Earth", and Lizzie Vaughn from "Prairie", Sarah Weatherby from "Heritage" and the Haldmarnes from "Now in November". Contact with the soil causes Caleb Gare to become harsh and bitter. In Sarah Weatherby the soil

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less 'assist to become here' and other. In Sarah Meatherby the soil

develops greed. To make the land productive she sacrifices the finer issues of life and demands of her husband and children unremitting labor in order that she may acquire more land, more money, and more importance as mistress of a farm. To Beret and Lizzie Vaughn the soil is a menacing force. The broad sweeps of cultivated land are haunted for them with spectres of loneliness which fill them with strange forebodings, eventually affecting their minds. The Haldarmes become morbid because of their inability to cultivate the earth successfully and the reader shares the impotent force of their frustration.

In those novels where the soil is a constructive force the characters, though individualized, share similar characteristics. One is impressed with the simplicity of their acceptance of life, their endurance and courage, and the fact that life is significant to them. Thus these novels are hopeful in tone and not mere sordid accounts of man's existence close to the earth. In tone they are wholesome and stimulating.

In a similar fashion the characters in the novels where the soil acts as a destructive force show resemblances, for they are either harsh, greedy, bitter, and selfish, or they are filled with doubts, fears, and frustrated hopes. Thus the tone of these novels is grim or depressing and the novels sordid or unhealthful.

Among all the novels in which the soil enters there are few that contain elements of greatness for a combination of literary style and universal appeal. Those novels that do contain these elements and, therefore, face the possibility of survival are

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"Joanna Godden", "Time of Man", "Barren Ground", "Joseph and His Brethren", "Giants in the Earth", and "The Good Earth".

of these novels "Giants in the Earth" and "The Good Earth" are, perhaps, the greatest since they are epic in scope. Told with the simplicity of a Bible narrative they might well be the account of the first man and the first woman. The combination of simplicity of narrative and loftiness of style gives to these novels an ageless quality. It does not seem unreasonable to predict that in years to come people will read of the courageous Per Hansa to whom the earth was a challenge and test of his strength and of Wang Lung, the farmer, who drew his strength from the earth.

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## DIGEST

A phrase familiar to the reader of literary reviews is the expression "a novel of the soil". To define the expression, however, the reader should interpret the word soil to mean the actual earth and not nature in any manifestation. Then, too, he should not define the soil novel as any novel into which the soil enters. but should consider the real novel of the soil as one in which the soil is such a predominating influence in its effect upon plot and character that it is the central force of the novel. To test the validity of the definition, it is necessary to examine all the novels in which the soil is present, to weigh the importance of the soil, and to discover the novels in which the soil is the most potent factor. These last novels, which are the real soil novels, should be analyzed in detail; the effect of the soil upon the plot and characters, shown; and the novels evaluated. Because of the vast scope of the subject it is expedient to limit the field to American and outstanding English novels published in the years from 1921 through 1934.

An examination of the novels with which the soil has any connection reveals the fact that these novels may be classified in
the following groups: first, farm novels in which the farm serves
as a background for love interest or melodrama; second, farm novels
in which the farm is important as an historical background; third,

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An exchination of the nevels with wrich the soil has any act section reveals the fact that these nevels may be alugated in the following groups: first, farm nevels in which the films serves as a brokeround for love internat or mainteems; second, farm nevel a which the farm is important as an alstorical becommunication farm novels of local color; fourth, farm novels in which the soil is the basis for agrarian or economic problems; fifth, novels in which the soil becomes an important factor but not the predominating one; and finally, novels in which the soil is the central force of the novel.

Novels in which the farm serves as a background are numerous. As a whole, they are sentimental. The farm setting is
usually artificial and there is but little suggestion of the soil
in the novels of this type.

In novels where the farm serves as a historical background the element of soil is of slight significance since the attention of the reader is focussed upon pioneers' efforts to make history and to establish a civilization rather than upon the soil. In "Vandermark's Folly", one of these books, there is a soil passage of remarkable beauty in the author's description of the wedding of the plough and the soil.

In some farm novels in which local color is stressed, the soil enters, but it is of minor significance. Although the characters live close to the earth from which they wrest their livelihood, they accept the soil as a matter of course and are not affected by it.

In novels in which the soil becomes a basis for economic or agrarian problems, the authors are concerned not so much with the soil itself as with the difficulties which the characters encounter in adjusting themselves to the changed conditions surrounding them. The reader's attention is centred upon the char-

facts novels of local celor; fourth, farm novels in which the so is the basis for agrantar or economic problems; fifth, novels is which the soil becomes an important factor but not the predominating one; and finally, novels in which the soil is the centre

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acters and their problems rather than upon the soil.

Several novels closely approach the real novels of the soil in the fact that they contain characters who are influenced by the soil. None of these characters seem inseparable from the soil, however, nor is there the impression that the earth is the vital force in their lives, for although they like the soil and gain their livelihood from it or in some cases receive satisfaction in being near it, they do not reflect its influence in any respect. The soil is undoubtedly a factor in these novels, but it is not the most potent one.

Finally, in the novels which should be considered the real novels of the soil the earth is a force of such paramount importance in its effect upon plot and character that the novel cannot be conceived of apart from the soil. In some of these novels there are outstanding characters who incarnate the qualities of the soil. In other novels of this class, the soil acting as a constructive force in the lives of the characters assumes the role of a hero, or acting as a destructive agency plays the part of a villain.

One of the first real novels of the soil was Hamsun's "Growth of the Soil". This novel, written originally in Norwegian, is a notable one because of its universal appeal and rich style. The qualities of Hamsun are found in Pearl Buck's "The Good Earth", in the first part of Caroline Miller's "Lamb in His Bosom", and in Rölvaag's "Giants in the Earth".

Although there are few notable novels of the soil, the form

Deveral novels closely approach the real novels of the soil in the fact that they contein characters who are influenced by in the fact that they contein characters seem inseparable from the soil, however, nor is there the impression that the errit is the vital force in their lives, for simbough they like the soil and rein their livelihood frob it or in some asses receive saitafing tion in being near it, they do not reflect its incluence in any team the force of the gold is not reflect its incluence in any paspect. The soil is undoubtedly a factor in these novels, but it is not the most potent one.

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Afthough there are few notable navels of the soil the form

is such a popular one, it is to be hoped that a really great novel of the soil may be created in our own times.

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